

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A process for preparing acid formates in which
 - a liquid stream I comprising formic acid and
 - a liquid stream II comprising a metal formateare prepared,

the liquid streams I and II are fed to a rectification column in such a manner that a higher or identical feed point to the rectification column is chosen for the liquid stream II than for the liquid stream I,

the liquid streams I and II are mixed in the rectification column, with water being removed overhead from the rectification ~~column-column~~, and

a bottoms stream comprising the acid formate is taken off from the rectification column, which comprises the bottoms stream being produced as melt comprising less than 0.5% by weight of water.

2. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 85% by weight.

3. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 94% by weight.

4. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the liquid streams I and II are aqueous streams.

5. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the bottoms stream comprises less than 0.3% by weight of water, ~~preferably between 0.2 and 0.1% by weight of water, particularly preferably from 0.1 to 0.05% by weight of water.~~

6. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the bottom temperature in the rectification column is limited to a value below 135°C.

7. (Original) A process as claimed in claim 6, wherein the bottom temperature in the rectification column is limited to a value below 125°C.

8. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the feed point for the liquid stream II is chosen on or above the uppermost separation stage of the rectification column.

9. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ratio of the liquid streams II and I is chosen in such a manner that the molar ratio of metal formate from the liquid stream II and formic acid from the liquid stream I is in the range from 0.95 to 1.05; preferably 1.

10. (Currently amended) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the rectification column is fitted with separating internals of low pressure drop, preferably with ordered packings.

11. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the number of theoretical plates of the rectification column is chosen from 5 to 15.

12. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 3, wherein the content of liquid stream I of formic acid is at least 99% by weight.

13. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein the bottoms stream comprises between 0.2 and 0.1% by weight of water.

14. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 13, wherein the bottoms stream comprises from 0.1 to 0.05% by weight of water.

15. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 9, wherein the molar ratio of metal formate from the liquid stream II and formic acid from the liquid stream I is 1.

16. (Previously presented) A process as claimed in claim 10, wherein the rectification column is fitted with ordered packings.